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AUTHOR Hyun, Eunsook
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ABSTRACT

This study explored how early childhood practitioners perceive young boys and girls in the classroom. Specific research questions addressed include: (1) Are the perceptions that practitioners have of young boys and girls significantly different?; and (2) If there is a difference, what is the nature of that difference? The study identified whether these differences are seen positively or negatively among early childhood practitioners. Descriptions of young boys and girls in their classrooms written by 100 early childhood day care teachers were analyzed and the descriptions used to construct two sets of descriptive word lists. The two descriptive word lists were presented to the research participants, who were asked whether adjectives used to describe male and female preschoolers were positive, negative, or neutral; participants were also asked to write their perceptions of each preschool group. The findings indicated that the teachers' perceptions of preschoolers' gender differences were significant. The teachers tended to be less appreciative of the male preschoolers' way of playing, constructing knowledge and its use. Most teachers, who tend to be female, perceived female preschoolers as positive and sensitive learners. (Contains 39 references.) (SD)

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Gender-Fair and Gender-Congruent Practices in Developmentally and Culturally Appropriate Practice (DCAP)

(Research Proceeding Report)

Eunsook Hyun, Ph.D.

Florida Gulf Coast University

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Paper prepared for Early Childhood Teacher Education for Developmentally and Culturally Appropriate Practice (DCAP) Research Net, 1998 Annual Meeting and Research Presentation titled "Exploring Developmentally and Culturally Appropriate Practice (DCAP) Through A Nationwide Collaborative Teacher Preparation Project."

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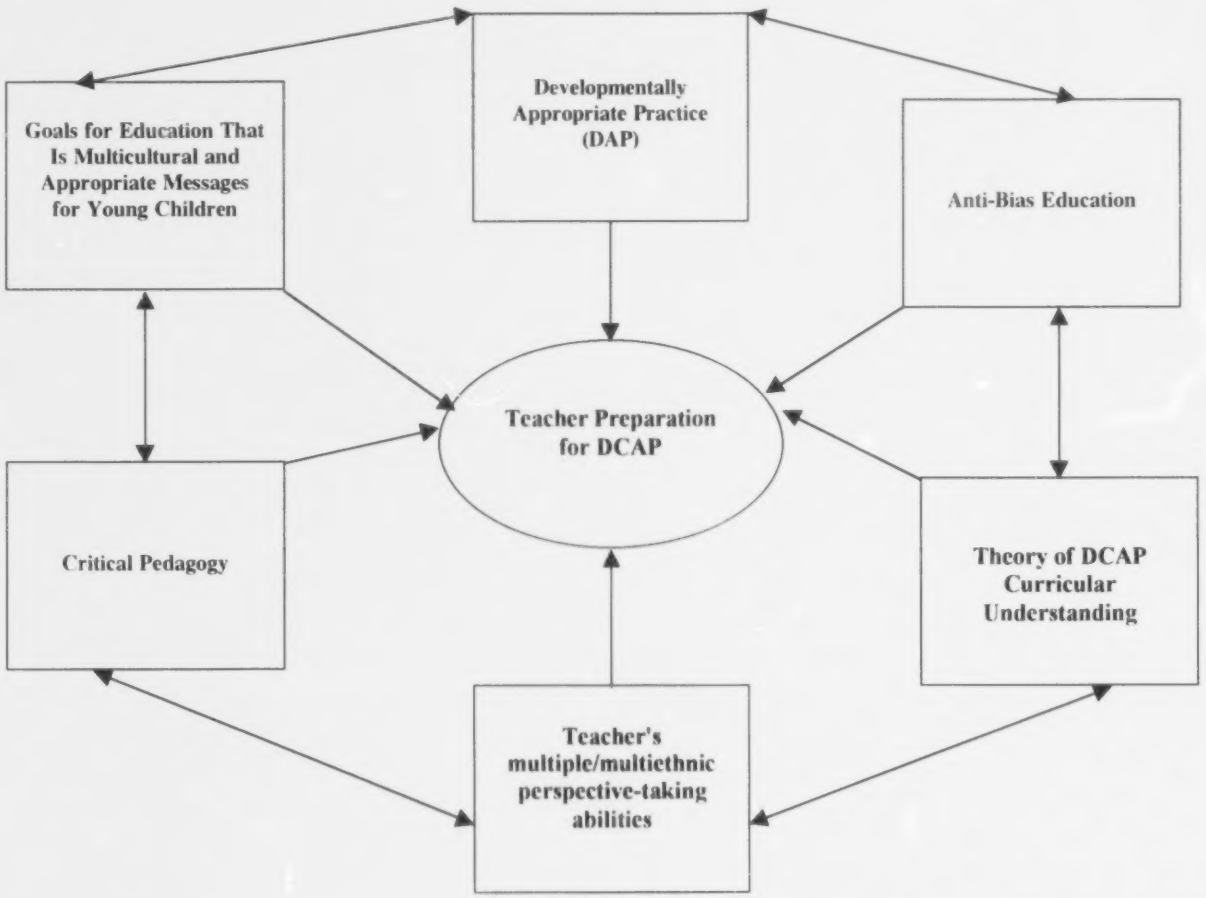
Gender-Fair and Gender-Congruent Practices in DCAP
(Research Proceeding Report)

Eunsook Hyun, Ph.D.
Florida Gulf Coast University

Basic Components of DCAP: A Brief Overview


Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP)
Goals for Education That Is Multicultural and Appropriate Messages for Young Children
Anti-Bias Education
Teacher Preparation for DCAP
Critical Pedagogy
Theory of DCAP Curricular Understanding
Teacher's multiple/multiethnic perspective-taking abilities

Brief Background for Teacher Preparation for Developmentally and Culturally Appropriate Practice (DCAP) Research Net

Since 1987, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has embraced Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) as a pedagogical guideline for Early Childhood Education (Bredekamp. 1987; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Over the last decade many early childhood educators have critiqued DAP (Bowman, 1994, 1992; Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992; Delpit, 1988, 1995; Derman-Sparks, 1992; Jipson, 1991; Mallory & New, 1994; Spodek & Brown, 1993; Swadener & Miller-March, 1993). DAP, they argue, must pay greater attention to cultural differences and be extended to include culturally appropriate practice. In response to this criticism, several teacher educators (Hyun, 1998; Hyun, 1996; Hyun, 1995; Hyun, & Marshall, 1997; Hyun, & Marshall, 1996; Hyun & Dana, in press; Hyun, Marshall, & Dana, 1995) developed a model which expands DAP called Developmentally and Culturally Appropriate Practice (DCAP).

Teacher preparation for DCAP is a proposal for a much-needed and workable teacher education model to help prospective teachers identify their own cultural and ethnic backgrounds and to understand cultural diversity while helping them learn to be sensitive to the cultural backgrounds and characteristics of the children they will teach. This model intends to help prospective teachers develop multiple/multiethnic perspective-taking abilities and culturally congruent critical pedagogy so that they can incorporate the cultural diversity of the children into their teaching. This approach ultimately aims to make early childhood education truly for all individual--multicultural.

In order to adapt DCAP as a framework for providing early childhood education that is more sensitive to multiple and multiethnic perspectives, teachers and prospective teachers should be familiar with the following components which serve as a foundation for DCAP: (1) Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) (Bredekamp. 1987; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997); (2) the goals of multicultural education and appropriate messages for young children (York, 1991); (3) Anti-Bias Curriculum (Derman-Sparks, 1989), and (4) Culturally Congruent Critical Pedagogy (Hollins, King, & Hayman, 1994; Giroux, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1992; Nieto, 1992).

Based on these knowledge, teachers are required to reflect on their teaching by critically inquiring whether every child in the classroom has received an equal and culturally congruent teaching and learning experience for their development. The teacher strives to learn about and understand each child's unique family influence that directly affects the child's learning and problem solving skills. Through this process of critical pedagogy, the teacher reflects on how s/he can use the child's unique background as a powerful instructional tool for all the children in the classroom. This kind of fundamental reflective thinking used with the teacher's actual everyday practice

is what is meant by developmentally and culturally appropriate practice. Such reflection helps to ensure that teachers consider multiple and diverse viewpoints as well as the long-term social and moral consequences of their decisions. Teaching in this fashion will more likely result in education that is truly multicultural--for all individuals (Hyun, 1998).

We need continuous multiple approaches for creating developmentally and culturally appropriate practice in early childhood teacher preparation. This project started since 1995 with a few early childhood teacher educators. In November of 1996, a group of teacher educators had an initial meeting (at the National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators annual meeting in conjunction with NAEYC Annual conference) for a nation wide collaborative research project to implement the idea of DCAP teacher preparation. In November of 1997, at the NAEYC annual meeting, participants from eight different states (CA., PA., OK., FL., MN., MA., TX., NM.) involved in this national collaborative research project presentation. After the 1997 Annual meeting and presentation the research participants has increased up to 31 participants, 18 states including Hawaii and Ontario, Canada. This particular research group meets annually at NAEYC annual conference and shares their stories of DCAP teacher preparation--effectiveness, dilemmas, obstacles, re-defined/new ideas for practices, personal insights, etc.

Purposes of 1998 Annual Presentation, 1:00 - 4:00 p.m., Confederation 3, Royal York Hotel:
The purpose of this interactive symposium is to report, discuss, and share three years of the Nation-wide Collaborative Research Project - Early Childhood Teacher Preparation for Developmentally and Culturally Appropriate Practice (DCAP).

Summary of the 1998 presentation:
The presentation was designed for the nation-wide participants to present their ways of preparing early childhood DCAP teachers and the effectiveness of it as well as to share dilemmas, obstacles, re-defined/new ideas for practices, and personal insights. **This year our nation-wide research focus is "how we infuse the notion of DCAP teacher preparation into integrated subject areas in teacher education curriculum."** Using interactive symposium format, discussion leaders led group presentations and the sharing. After the small group report and discussion, as large group, multi-sites cross case analysis and conclusion were presented.

Rationale for the research of gender-fair and gender congruent practices in conjunction with teacher preparation for DCAP: Young children's gender difference in the culture of children's play has been recognized through numerous researches and from ECE teachers' naturalistic observations.

In the original DCAP framework, the Anti-Bias Curriculum component supports gender-fair learning environment. However, the meaning of gender-fairness--gender-congruent /gender-appropriate practice-- or "how to" maintain the gender-fairness has not been clearly articulated. In many cases, we are confused gender-fairness with "equity" issue. This research is an initial attempt to articulate gender appropriate practice in DCAP for ALL young children.

This particular issue has discussed with early childhood prospective teachers in their DCAP-based teacher preparation course titled EEC4212 - Integrated Curriculum: Social Studies, Humanities, & Arts in Florida Gulf Coast University.

Research Purpose and Questions: The purpose of this study is to explore how early childhood practitioners perceive young boys and girls in the classroom. Specific research questions include: Are the perceptions that practitioners have of young boy and girls significantly different? If there is a difference, what is the nature of that difference?

Research Perspectives: *Snips and snails and puppy dog tails, that's what little boys are made of. Sugar and spice and everything nice, that's what little girls are made of.* Of course, nursery rhymes do not really capture the essence of little boys or little girls, but they may capture our biases about human behavior. In a recent child care provider training program, two researchers (E. Hyun & M. Tyler) asked over 100 teachers to describe their preschool male students and female students. The teachers' large amount of responses, which represent their perceptions of young boys and girls raise several concerns regarding their gender-fair practices. A look at only those adjectives that begin with "A" provides a summation of their responses. For boys, teachers chose the following adjectives: active, aggressive, agitators, argumentative, and attention seekers. Contrast this against the adjectives chosen to describe girls: actresses, affectionate, artistic, and attentive. While there is no doubt that girls can also be aggressive and boys can be affectionate, the teachers do tend to label and separate them simply by gender, which may lead to inaccurate stereotypes in classroom practices.

The teachers' descriptions of preschool boys (in 113 different words) and girls (in 98 different words) in their classroom were distinctively different from each other and some of their descriptions of the two genders indicated serious gender biased perceptions (e.g., destructive or loud for boys, creative or quite for girls). This observation led me (and one of my FGCU colleague) to decided to explore the teachers' perceptions of preschoolers' gender differences by asking other practitioners in the same field of early childhood education to review the teachers' responses.

One of my interests in this study is whether teachers' perception of gender differences could support DCAP for the two different genders as well as individuals. As many researches have indicated the cultures of young boys' and girls' play, learning, communication, etc. are different from each other caused by both nature and nurture. Thus, young children require somewhat different learning environment that would support their gender congruent play and learning experiences.

Theoretical backgrounds: Developmental psychologist Arnold Gesell argued forcefully at the turn of the century that biology was the largest determiner of human behavior (Cole & Cole, 1989) while at the same time Sigmund Freud (Feldman, 1998) was arguing that nurture is the primary arbiter of human emotion and behavior. The debate has continued with each side gaining primacy at various periods in the 20th century. Sex hormones affect brain development and neural activity in most animal species, and they do so in humans as well (Hines & Green, 1991). Early on, hormones affect young children's play styles, leading to rough, noisy movements among most boys and calm, gentle actions among most girls (Maccoby, 1988, 1990). As children grow and begin to interact with

peers, they tend to choose play partners whose interests and behaviors are compatible with their own (Berk, 1997). Most researchers agree with Hamer & Copeland (1994), and Kagan (1998) who state that while influential, genes do not predetermine human behavior; environment also plays a role.

In addition to the biologic differences, adults view boys and girls differently and they treat them differently. This variation in the way the environment responds to children helps to further shape sex-role behaviors. Children's social contexts such as home, school, and community offer many opportunities to observe other people behaving in ways consistent with gender stereotypes. In addition, due to the contemporary media culture, children are inundated with media-developed role models. Figures in movies, television commercials, cartoons, professional athletes, and various types of video game characters provide detailed representations of stereo-typical female and male roles (Carlsson-Paige & Levin, 1987; Isenberg & Jalongo, 1997). As soon as children enter the world of the peer group, their peers encourage conformity to gender roles. Social pressures for gender-oriented play is believed to generalize beyond the classroom into other aspects of society as well.

While gender differences are rooted in a variety of different variables, the extent of differences remains a topic of debate. Because of the biases that adults maintain about gender and children's behavior, these differences may be artificially and unnecessarily encouraged. Further, these differences may be seen as negative and undesirable rather than natural and important. This study attempt to identify whether these differences are seen positively or negatively among early childhood practitioners.

Methods: Over 100 early childhood day care teachers' written descriptions of young boys and girls in their classrooms were used to construct two sets of descriptive word lists. The first list had a qualitative format (Form I, see next page) while the second had a quantitative format (Form II, not included in this report). The research participants were 40 early childhood pre-service teachers from a four-year college program, 40 early childhood in-service practitioners, and 20 day care administrators in two counties. The two forms (I & II) of descriptive word lists were introduced to the research participants. On Form II (quantitative), the participants were asked to identify whether adjectives used to describe male and female preschoolers were positive, negative, or neutral. On Form I (qualitative), participants were asked to review two different descriptive word groups, representing different gender groups. The participants were asked to write their perceptions of the each preschool group.

Example of the Response Form I

The words below describe children in preschool settings. Please review the words in each group and tell us your perceptions of the each preschool group.

Group 1	Group 2
Active **Loud** **Aggressive** **Energetic** **Noisy** **Physical** **Creative** **Busy** **Curious** **Hyper** **Inventive** **Risk takers** **Stubborn**	**Quiet** **Talkative** **Sensitive** **Like to and/or want to please** **Artistic** **Bossy** **Creative** **Manipulative** **Whinny** **Social**
Your perceptions to Group1:	**Your perceptions to Group 2:**

Please identify your:
Gender: Male _____ Female _____ Age: _____

Years of teaching experience: _____Racial Ethnicity: _____

The research data require --without individual's name and his/her own affiliation-- gender identification, age, years of teaching experience, racial ethnicity, and group identification such as, students group, in-service practitioners group, or administrators group. These identification information are for an in-depth cross-case data analysis. Research participants' individual identification coding system will not be used. All the data will be treated and analyzed anonymously.

Data Analysis: Data collection and analysis are still in progress until February 1999. For this particular presentation, only 20 responses of Response Form I were analyzed. For the qualitative data of Form I, Unit analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and Strauss & Corbin's (1990) Open Coding, Axial Coding, and Selective Coding have been used and will be continuously used to find categories and patterns which represent emerging themes in the data. After the complete data collection, Chi Square will be used for the quantitative data (Form II) analysis to see whether frequencies of the participants' responses represent some significant differences in teachers' perception of preschoolers.

Current Findings from the Response Form 1 (note; the analysis is still in progress):

	Perceptions to Group 1 (Boys)	Perceptions to Group 2 (Girls)
Preservice Students	They are **hyper** and **outgoing**.	These children are reserved or inhibited and do not take risks.
	These could describe students with **ADD**...	Sounds like a diverse group.
	They stay busy and are allowed freedom to create and use their imaginations as well as express themselves.	The group may work well together; children are able to express themselves through art and other ways. They are egocentric, but **learning** social skills.
	A mixture of boys and girls.	A mixture of boys and girls but less number of children than group 1 possibly.
	This seems like the average preschooler.	This seems like a more **sophisticated student**, perhaps may be a little order than preschool age.
	Crazy. This group would be on-the-go all the times. These kids would drive me **crazy**. I need a little place once-in-a - while to keep my sanity.	**Calm**. I could work much better with this group of kids. They seem more personable and loving.
In-service teachers	The children need a lot of attention.	I can tell that parents and teachers are there for them.
	Hyper	**Nicer**
	It is describing a boy.	
Administrators	Fun. Athletes, performers Exhausting or tiresome **Outdoorsy**	School children (in doors) Literate - readers or drawers **Teachable** **Academic**

Conclusion for the presentation:

Even though the data collection and analysis are not yet completed, several emerging themes have been identified. The teachers' perceptions of preschoolers' gender differences seem significant. The teachers tend to be less appreciative of the male preschoolers' way of playing, constructing knowledge and its use (frequently used words in describing Group 1 in the Response Form 1: hyper, crazy, and outdoorsy). Most teachers (who tend to be female, "gender-match") perceive female preschoolers as positive and sensitive learners (frequently used words in describing Group 2 in the Response Form 1: learner, calm, nicer, teachable, academic).

Boys and girls are different in the classroom. Some of these differences are genetic, others are environmental; most are a combination of what one is born with and what one learns. The role of DCAP teacher is to find ways to support the natural tendencies and strengths of the child, while at the same time promoting behavior that is socially acceptable and helps the child meet their unique individual needs. This research shows that in some ways, preschool teachers may reinforce young children of both sexes for "feminine" rather than "masculine" behavior. In classrooms, obedience is usually valued and the teachers discourage assertiveness. In this study, 99% teachers were female which represents the typical teacher population in early childhood education. This institutionalized "feminine bias" is believed to promote a certain degree of discomfort for boys in school. As L. Berk (1997) argues, it may be equally or even more harmful for many girls, who willingly conform, with possible long-term negative consequences for their sense of independence and self-esteem. This research supports previous studies done by Fagot (1985), Oettingen (1985), Robins and Canaday (1978). In the field of early childhood education more than 85% of teachers are female. Feminine bias pedagogical practices tend to be overwhelmingly strong and thus, the teachers' DCAP classroom practices and curriculum are questionable in maintaining a gender-appropriate/gender-congruent child developmental experience and gender-fair learning environment.

I hope to consider this study is a point of departure to continuously uncover an unknown perception of ECE teachers' gender-fair and gender-congruent practices with the framework of DCAP.

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